

THE GEORGIAN REPORT



Volume 11 Number 4

St. George's Episcopal Church Schenectady NY

December 2020

WE NEED SOMEONE WHO ACCEPTS EVERYONE



We bring good news and bad news. Good news: Bishop Love will step down on Feb. 1, 2021. Bad news: Presiding Bishop Michael Curry isn't available to replace him. It's no surprise that some Georgians put Bishop Curry on their wish list to be the new Bishop of Albany, someone "who believes in the power of love above all..." The Albany Diocese will need lots of TLC plus some positive thinking to get back on track.

Some history of St. George's and the Diocese might be useful here. "In the 1950s and 1960s St. George's was the largest parish in the Diocese of Albany – it commanded attention. Then, St. George's was socially conservative, liturgically conservative and very Anglo-Catholic. The Diocese of Albany also leaned towards Anglo-Catholic worship and was conservative. We all aligned well. As years passed, St. George's became more socially moderate, yet still liturgically Anglo-Catholic. The Diocese morphed into social conservatism and worship moved towards a charismatic evangelical style. The old alignment was fractured."

When I emailed members of the St. George's community asking what qualities they think will be important in our new bishop, their suggestions trended toward similar themes. St. George's has never had a comfortable relationship with Bishop Love: his antipathy toward our previous rector is one reason for this as our interactions have not been adversarial since the arrival of Fr. Matt. The bishop's and our ideas about outreach clashed from the start: St. George's made a point of welcoming the gay and lesbian community while the bishop made a point of denying their access to the sacrament of marriage. One Georgian did credit the bishop "for his faithfulness, his spiritual discipline and his courage to stand up for what he believes, despite the consequences." But in the more general view, "Bishop Love paid lip service to the commandment 'love one another,' and tried to paint himself as a father figure enlightening the misguided. In reality, his stubborn ego was more important to him than his fellow Christians. It was effectively a door slamming in the face of many faithful. He was meaner than he needed to be and blazed a trail of alienation and hurt."

This issue has not lost its importance to Georgians. Over and over, I heard and read: We need "someone who accepts everyone." "I want a bishop who puts love of neighbor first." "Who is tolerant of different people and different life styles ... who celebrates love for everyone, as taught by Christ and our Presiding Bishop." "Someone who personally radiates a spirit of love for all in our diocese (not a spirit of factionalism)." "... bold in understanding that inclusion means the full offering of our rich sacramental life to those who seek it." "The first requirement for a new bishop would be that he agrees with the Convention's approval of gay marriage and will continue to do so even if the current U.S. Supreme Court strikes down its earlier decision legalizing gay marriage throughout the country." "... that is all we ask to have a bishop that shows God's love for all people, accepts them as they are and offers everyone a full and open life in the Church, including marriage. It's plainly written in scripture – *'Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy*

(Cont'd page 2)

neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. ' [Matthew 22:37-40]"

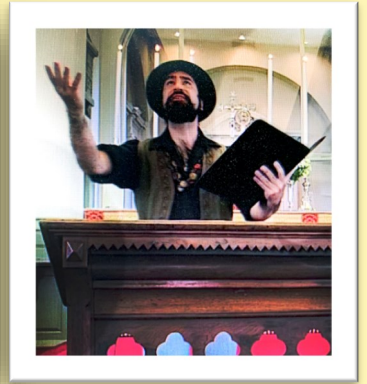
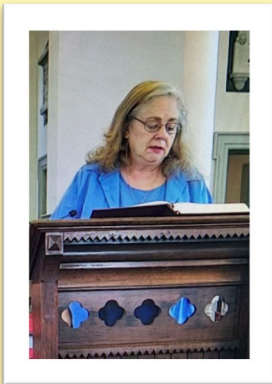
Our new bishop must be a true minister to everyone, be willing to work with the parishes in our diocese as we struggle to attract members from this secular world. He shouldn't hide in the mountains. "A bishop who is willing to engage with parishes and really listen to parish needs and concerns." "A pastor who will inspire and support parishes to experiment with new ministries through which we might do a better job fulfilling the Great Commission." "A Bishop who will once again work from the cathedral in Albany, as our cathedral, instead of from the Spiritual Life Center." "The qualities of kind acceptance and non-discrimination are what drew me to the Episcopal Church in the first place. To be confronted by another snide elitist would seriously make me question my choice of worship style. I look forward to being inspired and encouraged, not sidelined and made to feel defective."

We are a thinking Church. As one parishioner stated, "Our faith tradition has always been grounded in the three-legged stool of scripture, tradition and reason." This bishop must be "A clear and sincere proclaimer of the Good News of the Christian faith set forth in the Church's creeds and prayer book." "He should be "tolerant of 'High Church' liturgy and customs." "... he should provide steadfast leadership as he guides us to a deeper understanding of our faith." S/he should be an educated, wise, and inspiring preacher.

The Albany Diocese certainly isn't stronger after nearly 14 years of Bishop Love. "Maybe it's time for a new approach. Maybe we need a more youthful spiritual guide. I would welcome a female, and/or a person of color. Another privileged white male may not be the best healer for our Diocese right now. Let's acknowledge evolving social mores and embrace reality!" Are we voices crying in the wilderness – is the search committee listening? Are they even asking? We can only pray that the next bishop is good for the entire Albany Diocese.

joan pearson

HOLY CROSS SUNDAY



Back to Church Sunday was renamed Holy Cross Sunday this year due to the pandemic. There were no ministry sign-up sheets or luncheon in the Great Hall, but we retained the St. Andrew's Society, the Kirkin' of the Tartans ceremony, and one bagpiper. Diane Reed was lector and, instead of a sermon, we listened to a powerful reading of "The Dream of the Rood" by local actor Kristoph DeMaria. Scholar/Medievalist, Arthur Bahr, son of Meredith Ewbank, pre-prepared a short lesson podcast on the background of the Anglo-Saxon poem. Holy Cross Sunday was received joyfully by both those in attendance and those "live" streaming Sunday Mass on Facebook.

lynn paska

SALUTING ST. GEORGE'S VOLUNTEERS

Kevin Decker has been a Georgian since 1982. As a teenager, he went to St. George's with his father on holidays. Morphing into adulthood, he became a staunch volunteer.

A Vestry member in the 1990s, Kevin enjoyed the challenge when elections were contested; multiple people vied for a seat; it was an honor to be chosen to run. "I served daily Mass (Monday and Thursday) for Fr. Wampler and Fr. Gross. In those days it was a low Mass, a very spiritual experience because of its simplicity. Some winter mornings I'd waddle through the deep snow, it was cold in the Lady Chapel, the radiators would be banging, and it was the closest I felt to God." Fr. Vang's acolyte master for years with up to 26 kids alternately serving on the altar, he also volunteered for Christmas pageants; church socials; and assisted the rector with various projects. Over the years Kevin has maintained contact with many of our former clergy; including Father Kirby, Father McQuade, Father DeWald, and Father Catania.



Leaving the area to teach at SUNY Plattsburg, after five years he researched other job opportunities and accepted a position with a training consulting firm. In 2008 he joined the Estée Lauder Companies, American manufacturer/marketer of over 32 brands of cosmetics and hair products. Still living up north but based in Manhattan, it was more than a six-hour drive. Moving back to Schenectady, close to a train station, was a no-brainer. Until the pandemic struck, he worked abroad extensively since 2014. Now based from home (and, missing co-workers), he is currently working to support the establishment of a new Estée Lauder manufacturing facility in Japan. Owning an old house a block from St. George's consumes Kevin's spare time with repairs/restoration. Electrical work is his expertise, he shies away from plumbing, and spends quality time in his garden.

"St. George's has changed over the years. Some changes are positive, he admitted. There were negatives in the past, people worshipping at St. George's more because it was the socially prominent parish rather than because they were committed to its mission. There were positives: "Georgians are very devoted; wonderful people with diverse abilities." He remembers Louise Waterman's costumes, Rosemary Van der Hoof's gardening, Alma King, and Jean Hambly "knitting for God." If he had his druthers, ministering to seniors in various housing complexes would be a priority. "Older people need a connection to their peers, particularly in a spiritual place. We should continue to reach out to them with ALM, now on hiatus due to Covid. And of course the Pastoral Care team, Jim Wingate and Ann Duff."

Back fulltime in Schenectady, Kevin is volunteering again. Prior to Easter, and continuing today, with no professional experience as a florist, he has taken responsibility for buying the Sunday flowers without reimbursement and arranging them on the High Altar, Lady Chapel and All Souls Chapel. "St. George's coloring makes everything look beautiful." He remembers past parishioner preferences when doing memorials.

Next time you're in church or "live" streaming Sunday Mass, make sure you appreciate the flowers....the thought, time and creativity that went into the arrangements. And, make sure you appreciate longtime volunteer extraordinaire, Kevin Decker.

lynn paska

FROM THE RECTOR'S STUDY



“The Lord repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!” Ruth 2:12

As I enter this season of waiting and hope and prepare with joy to celebrate the birth of our savior, my heart is full of a new sense of gratitude. With all that we have been through this past year as a parish, a nation, and a world, the imminent arrival of Christmas seems all the sweeter. The song the angels sing of good tidings and great joy for all people is a welcome sound. It's true that we cannot do all the festive things that we normally do but we find that we take those simple things we are able to do less for granted. Among the joys I cherish is our community life here at Saint George's. I want to thank

you all for making the ordeal that has been 2020 more bearable!

I want to take the time to thank some of Saint George's "essential workers." Dr. Brian Taylor, our music director, was indispensable in every way. During the lock down, Brian was my constant partner in the daily office, keeping a regular schedule of Masses, and bringing you the best live streamed content we could manage. We absolutely couldn't have done any of it, especially Holy Week, without his tireless efforts. The same goes for David and Anne Kennison who were part of the small crew that helped make our Sunday Mass and Holy Week services possible. During the lockdown, they single handedly managed what normally would take a whole team of people. We also had volunteers join us as cantors including Jon Ewbank, Tarik Wareh, Joyce Cockerham, and Jeff Wengrovius.

Speaking of Jeff, we all owe him and our parish administrator Bob McCloskey a huge debt of gratitude for their tireless efforts at maintaining our finances and keeping things in good order this year. Again, they did the work that normally would be done by a whole team of volunteers, keeping the count and making bank deposits. They, along with our wonderful vestry, also moved quickly to secure us the stimulus loan that made such a difference in carrying us through. People may not be aware of just how much time and effort went into researching that, applying, filling out the necessary paper work, distributing the funds, and securing the forgiveness of the loan. It was quite a project and I am very grateful for their efforts.

This year we also accomplished a tremendous amount of building maintenance that we have been intending to accomplish for quite a long time. Repairs were made to Cranmer house including painting and new steps on all the entry ways. Work was done on the roof of the church. Our ventilators were repaired making our space much safer during the pandemic. Repairs were made to our boilers and heat including asbestos removal. A new dishwasher was researched and purchased. Work was begun on procuring a new floor for the Great Hall entry way. Internet was installed in our church opening up new possibilities for video ministry thanks to Jon Pearson and David Kennison! A new video and sound system upgrade was installed by Larry Vrooman and Sound Solutions marking a huge leap forward for communications. Thank you to Bob McCloskey, Jon Ewbank, and Jeff Wengrovius who did so much of the legwork on those projects!

Our wardens and vestry deserve our thanks too. They have really rallied together in service of our parish. A special thanks belongs to Sue Hartz who has served as our Senior Warden for the past few years but has now passed the torch to David Kennison. Serving as a vestry member or warden is a huge responsibility and I am grateful we have volunteers willing to take on the task.

I would be remiss in not thanking Kevin Decker who has graciously provided us with flowers for most of the year. I don't believe our flowers have ever been more beautiful or consistent in all my time here. A huge thank you must also go out to Meg Hughes, Suzy Unger, Debbie Lambeth, Barb Wengrovius, Jim Wingate, and our sextons and maintenance employees who continue to make our gardens and campus beautiful and the jewel of the Stockade!

As always, thank you to all our many volunteers who serve as lectors, greeters, acolytes, altar guild, and counters. Thank you to Jim Wingate who, as he always does in his quiet way, reached out to our shut ins with the love of Christ during this particularly trying time. Jim is also the kind heart behind the birthday and anniversary cards sent to our members, and the generous benefactor behind many worthy projects! Thank you to Alice and Ralph Pumbo for maintaining and organizing our charitable giving and outreach. Thank you also to Bob and Lynn Paska for their excellent work on this publication! Space does not permit me to thank everyone by name in this article because this was really was a team effort involving all of us. A blessed Advent and Christmas, and a Happy New Year to you all!

grace and peace, fr. matthew stromberg

Fall Outreach

Thanks to all who hung a coat on the Great Hall rack as part of George's fall coat collection. 18 outer garments (7 ladies, 3 men's and 8 children's) were delivered to a grateful City Mission on Monday, November 23rd.



alice pumbo

Seasons Change



Garden Ministry concluded their labors for 2020 with a celebratory tea and tour of Meg Hughes's home garden. Meg and the other gardeners (Barb Wengrovius, Debbie Lambeth, and Suzy Unger) enjoyed an especially balmy fall and worked in the church gardens right up to November 10. To keep the team feeling appreciated and cozy, Meg sponsored some fleece jackets emblazoned with a customized Garden Ministry crest. Masks came off quickly for the photo and the tea.

meg hughes



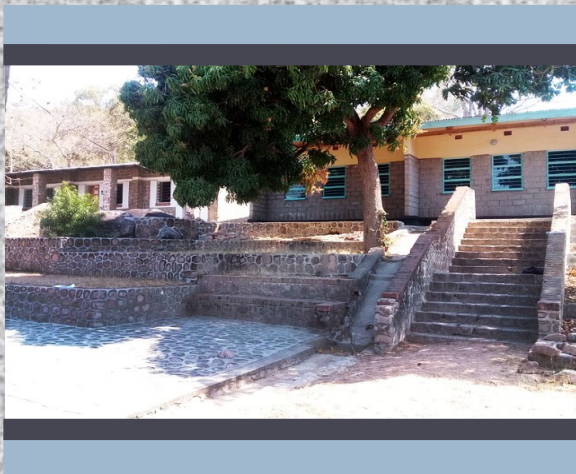
Christmas Mystery

The church's book club recommends *"In the Bleak Midwinter"* by Julia Spencer-Fleming as a fun, seasonal read. It's a mystery novel with local interest AND a female Episcopal rector as its main character. Rev. Clare also happens to be an ex-military helicopter pilot and adept at crime-solving. But she's not the sole resident of fictional Miller's Kill (sort of an amalgam of Washington County towns). You'll also meet the Vestry and the rugged looking chief of police.

alice pumbo

Farther Kirby Memorial

Many Georgians attended last year's Mass at St. George's Church to commemorate Fr. Kirby's ministry, honor his 100th birthday, and to make a donation to the construction of a new laboratory in his memory at Bishop Biggers Secondary School in Likoma Island, Malawi. The Reverend Kirby Lab is completed and students are using it. According to Headmaster Fr. Jolly Chadzuka, it is one of the best laboratory structures in the Country as far as secondary schools are concerned.



DIOCESAN CONVENTION 2020

As conventions go, the diocese's 152nd convention was a doozy! Unlike any previous, no Camp-of-the Woods, no weekend of festivities, no families and children, no sleeping in cabins, no swimming in the lake, no camp food. Fear of Covid-19 touched the Diocesan Convention and everything changed. The original June date was delayed to October. The normal 3-day affair was compressed to one Saturday.

Oh, the convention did go on, albeit virtually. Delegates and clergy from across the diocese all sat in front of their video screens and watched the live stream from the Spiritual Life Center. Voting was done via Zoom. Not quite the same, but in the end, the diocese's business got done.



Bishop's Address After calling the convention to order, Bishop Love gave his customary address. Leading with some preliminaries, thanks and recognitions and tributes to 9 diocesan clergy who died this year, +Love paid tribute to his mother Frances who had died just prior to convention. He reviewed his ordination record during his tenure – 181 ordinations (79 priests and 102 deacons). And he honored the victims of Covid-19 and lamented the impact it has had on our parishes and our worship. He decried the increase in racism and bigotry in our society and the victims it has claimed. And he acknowledged that the diocese has three lawsuits filed against it for clergy sexual abuse of minors in the 1960s, thence offering prayers for the victims.

Bp Love then got to the shocker of the day – after 14 years, he is resigning as the diocese's 9th bishop, effective Feb 1 2021, following a 1-month sabbatical in Jan 2021. The forcing issue is the recent judgement of the Hearing Panel of The Episcopal Church, which found that Bp Love has *“failed to abide by the Discipline and Worship of the Episcopal Church”*, thus violating his vows of ordination. This stems from Bp Love's refusal to allow same-sex marriage in the diocese, imposed by Resolution B012 of 2016 General Convention. Bp Love said that although he disagreed with the ruling, he saw no path to a successful appeal and thus resigned his bishopric. *[several other bishops in the Church have also protested this resolution but none has resigned]*

In Bp Love's absence, the Ecclesiastical Authority in the diocese falls to the Standing Committee, by Article IV of the Constitution of The Episcopal Church. Selection of a new bishop also falls to the Standing Committee, so they will have a very busy year. This is similar to what happens in a parish when the rector leaves. The only thing we are sure of is that a new bishop will support same-sex marriage and so will likely be more accepting of differences between us all. In leaving, Bp Love praised God for diocesan success and gave his blessing to all.

Voting and Convention Resolutions Various offices were voted to fill from nominations, seldom contested. Those offices are: (1) The Great Cathedral Chapter, (2) Convention Representative to Diocesan Council, (3) Trustees of the Diocese, (4) The Disciplinary Board, (5) Provisional Deputies to General Convention, (6) The Standing Committee. Resolutions were mostly perfunctory, as follows:

- 1.) Increase the recommended clergy stipend schedule by 2.0%. PASSED A schedule of normative 2021 salaries for parishes of different sizes was provided.
- 2.) Use the Reduced Standard Assessment Formula for 2020 parish assessments. By this formula, St. George's 2020 assessment is \$11,384, down from \$14,519 in 2020. PASSED
- 3.) Approve the proposed 2021 Diocese of Albany Operations Budget. The 2021 budget is \$1,516,273, up from \$1,458,361 in 2020. PASSED 79% of this (\$1,190,533) comes from parish assessments.
- 4.) Courtesy resolutions to thanks diocesan and convention staff and Christ the King staff. PASSED

Other gleanings of note:

- The 2020 income budget for the Spiritual Life Center (aka Christ the King) is \$1,840,005.
- The 2021 Diocesan Payments & Commitments (support to The Episcopal Church) is \$93,901 (6.2% of income). The expected support level is 15%, paid by more than 90% of dioceses.

And so ended the 152nd diocesan convention. We missed seeing old friends but look forward to next year, strong in faith and full of hope and prayer for the coming year.

david kennison



MUSIC AT ST. GEORGE'S



SATURDAY COMPLINE

On Saturday evening, March 14th, our Rector was preparing for the first live-stream of Sunday Mass from his dining room on Facebook. As a test, he signed onto Facebook on Saturday night and said the office of Compline, the late evening prayer service from the Book of Common Prayer. I happened to be out of town that weekend but watched it from Georgia.



The following week he wanted to run a test again as we would be live streaming Sunday Mass from the church itself. He asked if I would come over and say Compline with him which I was happy to do. This began a tradition of the two of us offering Compline each Saturday night at 8:30 p.m. We sing the Psalm, a hymn and the traditional Compline canticle, the Nunc Dimittis. The four traditional Psalms for Compline are Psalms 4, 31:1-6, 91 & 134. The traditional Compline hymn that we usually sing is no. 44, "To you, before the close of day."

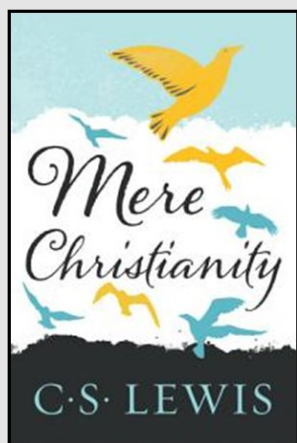
Compline is a short service of prayer that can be said on any night of the week. The Rector and I, however, have found Saturday Compline a great preparation for worship on the Lord's Day.

This service is not only live-streamed on the St. George's Facebook page but is also open for anyone to attend in person as well. We currently do it in the Lady Chapel behind the High Altar.

We invite you to consider joining us in person or online each Saturday as we offer prayer and praise to the Almighty before retiring for the evening.

brian j. taylor

FALL STUDY COURSE — MERE CHRISTIANITY



Fall Sunday evenings at St George's were spent studying Mere Christianity, C. S. Lewis's enduring book on the Christian faith. Between 1941 and 1944 C.S. Lewis gave a series of radio fireside chats to bolster a disheartened nation worried about WWII's status. These talks were compiled and became Mere Christianity in 1952.



Father Matt used Zondervan publishing's "Discussing Mere Christianity, Explaining the Meaning and Relevance of C.S. Lewis's Greatest Book" as course material. He felt it was a well-produced series about this most important work. It consisted of 8 sessions, introduced by Eric Metaxas. Each session dealt with a portion of Mere Christianity and featured a lecture by a Lewis scholar. Over the 8 weeks we learned biographical information as well C.S. Lewis's conversion and acceptance of Christianity. In addition, aspects of Christianity were examined which led to thoughtful discussion, reflection and clarification by Father Matt.

It was a challenging and very worthwhile way to spend Sunday night.

alice polumbo



The Promise of Advent

Here we are in Advent again. A season we love to remember, ending a year we'd like to forget. We sure could use some good news. And we have it – in Advent!

Advent – beginning, starting, opening. These are some of the ways we use the word “advent”, even without theological intention. The advent of the jet age, the advent of home computers, the advent of Christianity. The advent of something means that it’s finally here. That which has been promised has arrived. We have been waiting for so long and now, our longings have been realized. Our prayers have been answered.



The star in the night sky heralds the birth of the Christ child!

In Christianity, Advent is a season, 4 weeks – the first season of the church year. The beginning, the foundation for the rest of the year. Why is it so important? Because Advent is a time of expectant waiting and preparation for both the celebration of the Christ’s Nativity at Christmas, our reception of Christ in our hearts, and the return of Christ at His promised Second Coming. The liturgical color of Advent is purple or sarum blue, symbolic of penitence, expectation and royalty.

“Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people, for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” Luke 2:10,11

Advent is a time to prepare ourselves for His coming. Yes, it is full of anticipation but also a season of penitence. We prepare with fasting, praying and quiet reflection. After all, the human birth of the Son of God is almost upon us! The Word made Flesh! The Savior of the World! How could we go about the daily round without prayer and without preparation?



Maybe we count the days with an Advent calendar or the weeks with an Advent wreath. These are not Christian symbols but they add to our sense of anticipation. We don’t anticipate presents and Santa Claus, but something far greater – the birth of Jesus, the Son of God! Advent is not Christmas, although that’s impossible to discern nowadays. Decorations appear months ahead, stores bombard us with offers and advertising, desperately trying to get us in the door, even if the door is a web site and the cart is a UPS truck. Our commercial Christmas comes and goes – some discard their trees the next day, many are gone by New Year’s Day, and a very few hold onto

them until The Epiphany. Done and dusted, our commercial Christmas is transitory and fleeting but Jesus’ birth changes us forever.

*Hark! The herald angels sing, Glory to the new born King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim, Christ is born in Bethlehem!
Hark! The Herald angels sing! Glory to the New-born King!*

I’d like to think that this year - a year of pandemic, upheaval and uncertainty, of painful death and mass Infections - we could make Advent a spiritual experience, a life-affirming reassurance, a time of meditation to give thanks to God for the health we do have. We pray for the dedicated people who make our health possible, who risk their lives to keep us safe. We take the time to pray to God for peace in the world and an end to our political rancor, a time to look towards heaven, a time to wait for the celebration of Jesus’ birth, who was born and died that we may live, who calls us to a higher purpose of love, forgiveness and prayer. We find solace in the hope that the good and beauty in humanity, made in God’s image, will ultimately prevail.



Alleluia, Alleluia. Verbum caro factum est Alleluia.

“Alleluia, The Word made flesh Alleluia” John 1:14

PET BLESSING



Sable was outnumbered....1 cat to 6 dogs....but the blessing of the animals on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi took place at 2PM at St. George's, outside at the west doors "...for grateful hearts and gentle hands and for a spirit of respect and wonder for the animals entrusted to our care."

Attendees included the birthday girl, Hope, a papillon with her owner Mary; a beagle named Buddy with his owner David; a yearly returnee, Corduroy, a cairn terrier, with her humans Ann and David; a shy akita named Bojack with her owner Tina; Cody, a rambunctious golden doodle with her owners Rich and Suzy; tiny Loki, a cavalier spaniel, with her humans Taylor and Birkir; and the

lone feline, Sable, who was with his family: April, Helen and Isaac. A meaningful service and sermon, praying for the well, the ailing (Budweiser who has cancer), Kuntz in cat heaven, and Melvin and Chester, the out-of-state twin grandcats of Bob and Lynn. We also blessed the newly installed Pet Waste Station in front of Cranmer Hall.

Thanks to Fr. Matt Stromberg, and to Dr. Brian Taylor for leading participants in hymns. One pet owner attended other area Pet Blessings; this was her first time at ours, and promised to return next year.

lynn paska

- SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT -

First of all, I want to thank our Vestry for appointing me to be your provisional Senior Warden. Provisional means that this appointment is only good for 2 more months - until the 2021 Annual Meeting, at which time everyone can change their mind. I've been here before. Being a good Senior Warden is not a job for the faint of heart. I hope to acquit myself tolerably in the time I have.



I also want to thank some people: Sue Hartz, the prior Sr Warden, who did so much to control our ongoing costs, Jeff Wengrovius, our Treasurer, who gives of himself fully and continuously to manage our finances and stay within a balanced budget, Bob McCloskey, who ruthlessly digs for the best deal on everything we buy. Together, they are a large part of the reason St George's is in good fiscal health. I also want to thank Kevin Decker, who purchases and arranges the flowers that grace the high altar each Sunday. Over the decades, Kevin has held about every job there is at St George's and we all owe him a debt of gratitude. And great thanks to all of you who have not given up on St George's in the midst of this pandemic. I know life is tough and this will continue for a while, but your giving and attendance, physical and spiritual, keeps us a healthy, active and loving parish.

As a newly recycled Senior Warden, I've spent the past few weeks getting back up to speed. I've read a year's worth of Vestry minutes, financial reports, contractor quotes and 10 years of Parochial Reports, all to get a detailed picture of where St George's is now. And that is – unbowed, somewhat diminished due to Covid-19, but still comprised of good, intelligent people who love their God and love their church. Here are a few thoughts for what I see that we need to complete or accomplish:

Pledging: Warm thanks and much love go to those who have maintained their pledge throughout the pandemic, even when they felt safer staying home on Sundays. You have carried us through 2020 and we need to you stay committed to get us through 2021. But over the years, our pledging has gone down. We have kept our head above water due to stringent cost control. Now, my big ask – St George's needs you to do more. Not because the church needs paint or the roof needs fixing or anything else. We will always need those things. I'm asking you to give because we are Christians and the Holy Scripture that is preached every week asks us to give sacrificially give back to God a small portion of what he has given us. Yes, it hurts a little at the start, but it feels so good when we say "***I have tithed!***". Try it. Your life will improve and you will be one of St George's angels.

We Need New Members: The diocese had a motto a few years back named "Disciples Making Disciples". Yes, it was kind of kitschy but it was also kind of catchy. And it was true. St George's Mission Statement says "*The mission of St. George's is to bring all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.*" It comes from the prayer book catechism. It is the mission of all Christians. To bring people to God, to bring people to church. It's probably the hardest thing to do for all of us. Being a Christian is not easy. People have been crucified for their faith. But this is our job. God needs new souls. St George's needs new members.

St George's Web Site: How do people find a church nowadays? Hopefully, they have a trusted friend they can rely on (see Item 2 above). Lacking that, they check out a church's web site. Does it look nice? Are people happy and having fun together? Is the service something they can relate to? Are there kids? How is the preaching? Is it full of the frozen chosen? Is it full at all? If they don't like what they see, we never see them. So a web site is super important. Thanks to Jon Pearson's diligence, our existing web site is good and has served us well for 17 years. It now needs a fresher look and more meat in some areas. St George's contracted with a web site consultant early in 2020, but here in December the work is not done. It needs to be completed.

Historic Grant: Remember the steeple restoration project in 2013? We worked hard to get an historic preservation grant that covered half the cost. St George's is about as historic as they come. Such grants don't cover maintenance work such as painting, but they do cover preserving our history. There is more to be done at St George's. I am thinking of the swayback roof and the post and beam structure in the church. That has endured many insults through the centuries as the church has been expanded. You may have ideas, so please me know. The grant process can be long. I want to get started.

I could go on, but by now you're getting the idea. There is a lot of work to be done. Let's start it together, with faith and with joy!

with great affection, david kennison

- TREASURER'S REPORT-

Despite the difficulties due to the Corona virus in 2020, we have a lot to be thankful for concerning the financial aspects of St. George's Church. As we approach the end of the year, we wish to offer thanks to the following people:



- First and foremost, we offer thanks to our parishioners and friends who have given generously to our church. We are on track to meet our 2020 budget for giving, despite not having normal attendance due to the virus. Your dedication as Georgians has been fantastic. We will finish the year without having to take any money out of the principle from our endowments for the third year in a row.

- We offer thanks to Bob McCloskey, Sue Hartz, and others for the ongoing scrutiny of our spending. We continue to review every bill we pay to look for savings. Our "Slay the Dragon" Initiative never ends as we do everything we can to reduce costs.

- We offer thanks to Bob McCloskey, Jon Ewbank, David Kennison, and others for their work on projects to improve our church buildings. In 2020, we have spent about \$60,000 in maintenance and improvements.

These projects include:

- asbestos abatement in the church
- painting and carpentry on the outside of Cranmer House
- repair of the steps to Cranmer House
- repair and painting to some cornices on the church
- a new dishwasher for the kitchen
- repair of the fans to the church – special thanks to a generous parishioner who paid for this work
- upgrades to our boilers
- complete redo of our audio/video equipment in church

-We offer thanks to Jon Pearson for his ongoing supervision of our endowments. These accounts have prospered in 2020.

The project work mentioned above was funded by a PPP loan, surpluses of interest accumulated in our endowments, and by all of our giving. Moving forward, this additional money will be much less in 2021, thus we ask to you to please carefully review your 2021 pledge. We have already received some pledges, but need more as we prepare our budget for next year.

respectfully submitted dr. jeffrey wengrovius

SALVATION ARMY BELL RINGING 2020



St. George's has decided not to do a bell ringing stint for the Salvation Army this year. Covid-19 protocols make it much harder.

We ask that you make a special contribution to the Salvation Army. Simply make your check payable to the Salvation Army. Send the checks to Jon Pearson, 17 Via Maria Dr. Scotia, NY 12302 and I will get them to the Army and ask them to give St. George's credit.

In 2019 our bell ringing efforts raised \$670. We should be able to match that contribution without the risk of bell ringing. Please support the efforts of the Salvation Army during a year when the need for their help is greater than ever by making a contribution.

jon pearson



St. George's Episcopal Church

30 North Ferry Street

Schenectady, New York 12305

The Reverend Matthew R. Stromberg Rector

Telephone (518) 374-3163

[email: office@stgeorgesschenectady.org](mailto:office@stgeorgesschenectady.org)

www.stgeorgesschenectady.org

Editor: Lynn Paska

Layout: Bob Paska

Contributors:

Kevin Decker
Meg Hughes
Santee Hughes
David Kennison
Joan Pearson
Jonathan Pearson
Alice Polumbo
Fr. Matt Stromberg +
Brian Taylor
Barbara Wengrovius
Jeffrey Wengrovius

The Vestry

David Kennison, *Sr. Warden*
Jonathan Ewbank, *Jr. Warden*
Sean Albert
Carol Gaige
Margaret Hughes, *Clerk*
Sandra Hughes
Deborah Lambert
Marilyn (Lynn) Paska
Paul Smigelski
Richard Unger
Jeffrey Wengrovius, *Treasurer*

Office Staff

Administrator
Financial Secretary
Robert McCloskey

Director of Music Ministry
Brian Taylor

FROM THE TODT FAMILY ALBUM



The wedding of Stephanie Todt and Dave Colombo took place on September 4th at Middleton Place outside of Charleston, SC. The oldest daughter of Mike and Connie Todt, Stephanie is the International Program Coordinator at the College of Charleston; her husband is a Chiropractor. Congratulations to the newlyweds who are making their home in Summerville, SC.



A 3rd generation Todt was baptized on September 29th at St. George's: baby Charlotte Parker

Ronesi, daughter of Kathleen Todt Ronesi and her husband Jake. Proud maternal grandparents, Mike and Connie Todt, were in the pews with family, friends and Georgians. A lovely ceremony; an adorable baby. A wonderful way to spend a Sunday morning.